

Current Topics.

AN INTERESTING GAME OF CHESS BY mail is now in progress. S. Kaiser, a resident of Canton, O., and H. Bloch, of Warsaw, Russia, are the contestants. Fourteen days are required for a letter to pass between the players and it is estimated that the game will last for three years. The purse is \$5,000, three-fourths of which goes to the winner.

ALFONSO, THE YOUNG KING OF SPAIN, has had the honor of signing a decree establishing within his kingdom the eight-hour law. This decree limits to eight hours the working day for women and children. The real credit for this good measure, to be sure, belongs to the ministry, but the young king's name is associated with the plan and many good things are now being said of young Alfonso by the working classes of his country.

AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT HAS been made in the vicinity of an Orange, N. J., hospital. The streets surrounding this institution were sprinkled with oil and it is announced that the dust was laid and the atmosphere cooled more effectively than could possibly be accomplished by the use of water. It is not probable, however, that the Orange plan will be generally adopted, because of the high price of oil.

THE HEALTH AUTHORITIES OF OHIO are dealing with an epidemic of scarlet fever which, according to their idea, originated in a peculiar way. It is reported that upon investigation the authorities concluded that the contagion was spread by tame pigeons and doves which carried the germs from one place to another. This theory is based upon the fact that the fever spread under strict quarantine from a house on the roof of which there was a large pigeon cote. The only living thing about the house not quarantined were the pigeons, and the health authorities have come to the conclusion that they have correctly located the cause for the spread of the disease.

THE GERMAN RAILWAY AUTHORITIES have opened a war upon the kiss. A Berlin cablegram to the New York World says that these authorities are maintaining that the kiss is not only an indecent practice, but often tends to impede traffic, as kissers stand in the way of officials and passengers and crowds gather to witness the whole process of osculation. The World's correspondent says: The German is a virtuoso in kissing. He has a particular kiss for every function where one is required, and that imparted on the departure of a feminine friend is the longest. Driven to desperation by this prolonged kiss the railway authorities at Augsburg, Bavaria, arrested a man for making a nuisance of himself by this act and sentenced him to five days' imprisonment. The unhappy man was a husband and was bidding his wife good-bye. He has appealed to the superior court against this extraordinary sentence.

THE FALLING OF THE CAMPANILE OF St. Mark's has produced the suggestion that there is a general decay of the foundations of the city of Venice. A writer in the Boston Herald, commenting upon this suggestion, says: These foundations are not those of nature, but are the creation of man; and it would appear inevitable that, being such, they must at some time yield to the incursions of time. Confidence in them has come from the fact that they have stood for centuries, but now there are people who are saying that the subsoil of the city has deteriorated, and that the piles and pillars on which the buildings of Venice rest are rotting away. Much depends upon the intelligence, as regards scientific information, of the men who send out these statements. It is a remarkable fact that this square of St. Mark's, which is thus built over water upon artificial foundations, is the handsomest in Europe. The point that has given out in it is that where presumably the greatest pressure has been applied.

LINCOLN'S PRESCRIPTION IS SAID TO BE a favorite one among the descendants of an Illinois family whose head once appealed to Mr. Lincoln to advise him what to do in order to recover health. Mr. Lincoln replied with a prescription that might, with advantage, be used by people generally. This was Mr. Lincoln's road to health: Do not worry. Eat three square meals a day. Say your prayers. Think of your wife. Be courteous to your creditors. Keep your digestion good.

Steer clear of biliousness. Exercise. Go slow and go easy. Maybe there are other things that your special case requires to make you happy, but, my dear friend, these, I reckon, will give you a good lift.

OWING TO A DISPUTE BETWEEN THE partners of a book binding firm in New York city, Justice O'Gorman was called upon to choose a receiver, and to the surprise of many people, he named a woman. Mrs. Jennie M. Packer was the one chosen for this important task, and she has, according to all reports, discharged her duty in an admirable way. At the time of her appointment as receiver, Mrs. Packer was bookkeeper for the concern. She has under her control a factory employing forty people, and a business that under the receivership appears to be growing. It is said that under Mrs. Packer's management the warring partners have actually made more money than they made prior to the receivership. Mrs. Packer, however, does not believe that the work of a receiver would be generally agreeable to women. From her own experience, she says she would not advise other women to assume such a burden.

SOME IDEA OF THE IMMENSE BURDEN we have assumed in our policy of imperialism may be obtained by an investigation of the record of appropriations. The appropriations made for the army and navy at the last session of congress amounted to \$170,208,821. The appropriations made for the army and navy in 1897, the year immediately preceding the Spanish-American war, amounted to \$53,841,062, an increase, in five years, represented by the sum of \$116,367,759. Thus it will be seen that we are required to appropriate for our army and navy \$164,999,861 more than for our agricultural department. We are required to appropriate for our army and navy \$31,792,223 more than is necessary for the operation of the postoffices and postal system of the government. It is also worthy of note that the appropriations for the army and navy are something more than \$8,000,000 in excess of the appropriations necessary for the agricultural department, the postoffices and the postal system, for the diplomatic and consular service, for fortifications, for Indians, for rivers and harbors, for the operation of congress, for the United States courts and the entire judicial system, for the executive department, and for the preliminary expense of the isthmian canal.

THE IMPORTANT PART PLAYED BY THE agriculturists in the affairs of this country of ours is shown by a bulletin recently issued by the census bureau, giving the condition of agriculture in the United States for the year 1900. This bulletin shows that during the year 1900 there were 5,739,657 farms in the entire country, which were valued at \$16,674,694,247. Of this amount \$3,560,198,191, or over 21 per cent, represented the value of buildings, and \$13,114,496,056, or over 78 per cent, represented the value of lands and improvements other than buildings. The value of farm implements and machinery was \$761,261,550, and of live stock \$3,078,050,011. These values, added to the value of the farms, gives a total value of farm property amounting to \$20,514,001,838.

IN THE SAME CENSUS BULLETIN IT IS shown that the total value of farm products for the year 1899 amounted to \$4,739,118,752, of which amount \$1,718,990,221 was for animal products, including live stock, poultry, and bee products. The bulletin places the average size of farms in the United States at 146 acres, and it is stated that 49 per cent of the farm land is improved. The total acreage for the entire country was \$841,201,546. The number of farms in the United States has increased in every decade for the last fifty years, and so rapidly that in 1900 there were nearly four times as many farms as in 1850, and 25 per cent more than in 1890. The total acreage of farm land also has increased, but up to 1880 less rapidly than the number of farms, thus involving a steady decrease in the average size of farms. Since 1880, however, the total acreage has increased more rapidly than the number of farms, so that the average size of farms has increased. The total area of improved land has increased in every decade since 1850.

JOHN W. MACKAY DIED WHILE ENGAGED in one of the greatest enterprises of his enterprising career. It will be remembered that a bill was before congress providing for the construction of a Pacific cable to connect San Francisco with Manila, the cable to be owned by the government. Mr. Mackay proposed to construct this cable without subsidy, and at a cost of not less than \$20,000,000. He also promised that the

government could fix its own rates for official business, giving such business preference in transmission and further agreed that the government might control the cable's operation in case of war or other public necessity, and finally agreed to sell to the government at the government's option, the value to be determined by appraisal.

THE GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP BILL was vigorously pushed by Congressman Corliss of Michigan. Mr. Corliss challenged the good faith of Mackay and insisted that he had done nothing to show his serious intentions. Mr. Mackay's representatives produced certificates from the construction company showing that 1,100 miles of the cable had already been completed, and that the work was progressing at the rate of 26 miles per day. This showing resulted in the defeat of the Corliss bill by a vote of 116 to 88. It is announced by representatives of the Mackay company that Mr. Mackay's death will not interfere with the completion of the work. The Washington correspondent of the New York World quotes a representative of the company as saying that the cable will be in operation by July 1, 1903, provided the government will permit the Mackay company to use the navy department's soundings, which soundings were made several years ago by a government steamer for a route from San Francisco to Hawaii, and thence via the Midway islands and Guam to Luzon. This cable will cover a distance of 8,000 miles and it is said will cost not less than \$20,000,000.

THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME DIFFICULTY concerning the delivery of these soundings to the Mackay company. Admiral Bradford, to whom the matter was first referred, recommended that the company's request be granted. The matter was considered at a cabinet meeting and finally referred to the attorney general for an opinion. The attorney general has not yet acted. The World's Washington correspondent says that the last cablegram ever sent by Mr. Mackay was one in regard to the proposed Pacific cable. This cablegram was transmitted from London to New York only a few minutes before Mr. Mackay was prostrated. The cablegram was as follows: "Cook, New York.—I have read your cablegram to Ward relating to the soundings. The facts are these: The bid guaranteeing to manufacture and lay the cable from Honolulu to Manila, touching at Midway and Guam, by June next provided we can furnish the necessary soundings expires on the 21st inst., namely, on Monday next. Our desire has been to complete the cable as early as possible. We supposed the work could not be carried out before the end of next year, but as the contractors are able to handle the shipments of the cable quicker than we expected it is possible to complete it by next June. It is inexplicable to us why these soundings are withheld when the government and the whole country are crying out for the cable. The soundings taken by the Albatross in 1891 by act of congress to determine the practicability of laying a cable between California and Honolulu were freely distributed by the navy department. They were given out to any one who applied for them, and I certainly expected this slight assistance from the government after I personally explained our plans to the president last October. We shall of course go on with the manufacture of the cable, but I can get no guarantee from the contractors as to time of completion unless the Neros soundings are forthcoming, as it will be absolutely necessary to send a ship to ascertain a practicable route for the cable before it can be laid, and it certainly must be of importance to the government to have communication established as early as possible. It certainly is to the Commercial Pacific company."

THE MUCH HERALDED POLICY OF magnanimity adopted by the British ministry with relation to the Boers does not appear to be as popular in the Transvaal as it is in the columns of London newspapers. Two ex-officials of the South African republic sought to return to their homes, but the privilege has been denied them by the British colonial office. Mr. Chamberlain has decreed that Lord Milner must pass upon all these applications and without his sanction the desired privilege will be denied. Two facts may be accepted as somewhat significant. One is that the colonial office is determined to keep out of South Africa any of the former Boer leaders who might be suspected of a desire to yet win independence for their people. The other is that Boer leaders generally are exerting every effort to discourage their people from accepting invitations to emigrate to other countries. Judge Hertzog, a former official of the Orange Free State, delivered a speech recently in Cape Town, wherein he announced that the Boer leaders had